

GRATTAN TOWNSHIP BOARD
Budget Meeting of March 17, 2010

1. Call to Order

Township Supervisor Frank Force called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Members present: Supervisor F. Force, Treasurer Sabrina Freeman, Clerk J. Fues, and Trustee P. Knoerl. Members absent: Trustee D. Heffron.

3. Approval of the Agenda

J. Fues moved and S. Freeman seconded to approve the agenda as presented. All ayes. The motion carried.

4. Hearing of the Public

Kendra Chapman questioned why the meeting was held at 9:30 in the morning when most people are working. F. Force said because so many budget meetings are needed they typically are held during the day when all Board members can attend. Kendra Chapman said the meeting was not noticed until March 15 at 2:00 p.m. F. Force said by law meetings must be noticed at least 18 hours prior to the meeting.

(D. Heffron arrived at 9:40 a.m.)

There was a lengthy discussion about costs for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE) mandated irrigation upgrade, costs for sewer system repairs, sludge removal and options for sewer customer payment of those expenses. K. Chapman said some sewer customers are still paying the 2003 sewer assessment and questioned what will happen to sewer users unable to pay more. A. Rumbaugh said the Sewer Advisory Committee recommended postponing sludge removal to help reduce the sewer assessment at this time. F. Force said the system must be kept running in an efficient manner. If the irrigation system is not upgraded the Township will incur large fines from the MDNRE.

D. Heffron said when the sewer system was built 30 years ago about half of the funding came from Federal grant money. The cost of a new system today would be astronomical. When the system was built the intent was to set aside money for repairs, but that was never done.

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Approved: 4/12/10

There was discussion about projected costs for the irrigation upgrade. Board members said they will review the upgrade proposal and plan and go out for bids on much of the work. Board members said the project engineer will not be the contractor. Russ Lapham said the Board should get the contractor's input on design of the irrigation upgrade and have an inspector on the job verifying that work has been completed before any payments are made. D. Heffron said projected irrigation upgrade costs are high and when finalized should be lower.

The proposed \$25.00 capital improvement charge was discussed. It was noted that this money would be used for the most important capital improvements (approved by the Board) on Infrastructure Alternatives suggested repair list.

An audience member asked the Board to publish how the project is going to be managed to help build sewer customer confidence. A. Rumbaugh said when the Township holds public hearings no one comes. P. Knoerl said a sewer presentation is available for viewing on the Township's website. F. Force noted that letters explaining the proposed upgrades were recently sent to all sewer customers.

Another audience member asked if the proposed assessment could be added to sewer customer's property tax bill. S. Freeman said she will check on that.

5. New Business

Budget Issues

Board members reviewed the proposed budget. P. Knoerl questioned adding \$62,000.00 for the purchase of land for Seeley Creek Park to this year's budget. It was agreed to remove that expense. F. Force provided information he received from a company called State regarding a technique to eliminate grease from pumps and sludge from ponds. F. Force agreed to discuss this treatment with Infrastructure Alternatives. P. Knoerl said the Township should ask for references. He said the Township could offer a contract with specific requirements and guarantees and see if the company will sign the contract.

Sewer Ordinance Amendment

D. Heffron moved and P. Knoerl seconded to adopt ordinance 10-003 to amend Ordinance 07-006, the "Grattan Sewer Connection, Use and Rate Ordinance, to amend the definition of "User Charge" and other matters relating thereto.

Roll call vote: Ayes: P. Knoerl, D. Heffron, J. Fues, S. Freeman and F. Force.
Nays: none. The motion carried.

Capital Improvement Fee Resolution

Board members reviewed the proposed resolution to add a \$25.00 capital improvement charge to quarterly sewer invoices.

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F. Force moved and D. Heffron seconded to approve the resolution to amend sewer rates and charges for the Grattan sewer system and the Grattan/Vergennes sewer system to add a separate \$25.00 user charge per quarter per unit to be deposited to the Repair, Replacement and Capital Improvement fund effective April 1, 2010.

Roll call: Ayes: S. Freeman, D. Heffron, F. Force, P. Knoerl and J. Fues. Nays: none. The motion carried.

Financing of Improvements to the Grattan Sewer System

Board members discussed funding options for improvements to the sewer system and agreed on a bank loan. S. Freeman said soft costs will not be included in the loan. Board members discussed and agreed to have those numbers available at the public hearing.

There was a discussion about projected costs for the improvement. F. Force and D. Heffron agreed to review all costs associated with the irrigation upgrade proposal.

Seeley Creek Park Extension

F. Force said the 24.5 acre O'Brien property adjacent to Seeley Creek Park has been offered for sale. Board members discussed the cost of this property. It was noted that a two year purchase agreement for \$62,000 has been signed. The Parks and Recreation Committee plan to apply for a MDNRE land grant. If approved the Township would purchase the property and received a 75% reimbursed from the MDNRE. J. Fues estimated the township's total cost at \$20,000. The entire process can take 2 years to complete. D. Heffron said the additional property would be a good fit. P. Knoerl said purchasing the additional property would be okay if the Township has the money.

J. Fues moved and D. Heffron seconded to proceed with acquisition of the O'Brien property to extend Seeley Creek Park. Roll call: Ayes: F. Force, S. Freeman, D. Heffron, P. Knoerl and J. Fues. Nays: none. The motion carried.

FOIA Administrator

F. Force moved and J. Fues seconded to appoint Mary Kay Groening as the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Administrator for Grattan Township. All ayes. The motion carried.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, F. Force declared the meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Jim Fues, Township Clerk

Date

Draft: 03/19/10
Approved: 4/12/10

Franklin J. Force, Township Supervisor

Date

Diane Timmons
Recording Secretary